

# Helping Fathers and Neighborhood Partnerships

The Work of Community Access Grantees in the  
Responsible Fatherhood Program



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Family Assistance

**Real Families  
Real Strengths**

# Helping Fathers and Renewing Neighborhood Partnerships

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in the Responsible Fatherhood Program

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Introduction .....	3
Profiles of the Grantees.....	7
Analysis and Outcomes: What the Grantees Learned .....	10
Predictors of Success for Community Access Grantees .....	18
Recommendations for the Future .....	23
Conclusion .....	25
Appendix A: Resources from the Field.....	A-1
Appendix B: Summaries of Community Access Grant Projects.....	B-1

## Executive Summary

When it funded more than 100 Responsible Fatherhood initiatives nationwide in 2006, the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance also set aside a small number of grants for a community and neighborhood-based approach to father outreach. This Fatherhood Community Access Program (FCAP) sought a unique place in the programming landscape: it provided grants to large, established non-profits or government agencies that, in turn, would recruit and support small organizations providing direct services. These small organizations typically would have little knowledge of federal grants and limited capacity to apply for and administer such funds on their own. Nonetheless, by receiving sub-grants of up to \$50,000 annually, these same small agencies – by virtue of their “storefront” presence in cities, towns and neighborhoods – would be ideally positioned to recruit men and provide them with needed services within the context of their own communities.

This report provides a detailed snapshot of the five FCAP grantees funded from 2006 through 2011, including an analysis of successes and challenges with particular emphasis on the advantages of this innovative program model. Together, these five grantees provided seed funding to serve more than 50,000 fathers nationwide, a broad reach across many regions of the United States. Representatives of these large lead agencies offered candid assessments of the model and provided a rich description of sub-awardees and their work. Among other findings:

- Most grantees reported that their projects not only supported multiple small non-profits, but also helped to build new and stronger partnerships at the state and local levels.
- By concentrating service delivery at the local level, projects were able to increase “father friendly” activities in a non-threatening neighborhood environment.
- Grantees promoted the organizational development of sub-awardees through training, monitoring, evaluation, and other activities that helped raise the level of professional expertise at the local level.
- Grantees developed a request-for-proposal (RFP) process to award funds at the local level, a move that promoted goal-setting and quality. When sub-awardees did not perform to expectations, grantees did not hesitate to replace them with new grassroots agencies.
- Key predictors of success included: targeted technical assistance to sub-awardees; development of strategic tools and resources; community asset-mapping; development of

local and regional referral networks; skilled, experienced staff at all levels; and effective marketing campaigns focused on fathers.

Looking to the future, the report recommends a continued focus on this program model in the years ahead with several suggestions for improvement. These include a planning period for grantees prior to implementation and the establishment of clear, achievable objectives buttressed by quality data collection. All grantees also should establish resource networks so that sub-awardees can refer men to other services, including job training, domestic violence prevention education, and assistance with Child Support agencies. Taken together, these improvements would ensure even greater progress among grantees and their sub-awardees as they modify and perfect this program model. While the bulk of federal fatherhood grants – provided to medium- to large-size agencies – ensure a nationwide focus for the program, initiatives such as FCAP can reach hard-to-serve fathers while “growing” the field through effective development of small, community-based organizations.

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## Introduction

While policymakers can refer to a broad research base on the role of mothers in child well-being, the importance of fathers in child development and family success is not well documented. To address this gap in 2006, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (OFA) provided 101 competitive grants to States, territories, tribal organizations, public and non-profit community agencies, and faith-based organizations for projects focused on Promoting Responsible Fatherhood (RF).<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming majority of these grants target low-income men – many of them offenders or ex-offenders – by providing a variety of workshops designed to improve fathers' skills as parents, husbands, and partners in healthy relationships, all with the goal of improving the lives of their children and families. Funded under the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005, these projects provide a broad range of services such as parenting education, counseling, job training, relationship skills education, financial literacy, and support networks so that fathers can take a constructive, proactive role with their children.

While most DRA-funded RF grants supported direct service delivery, OFA also awarded a small number of grants that embarked on a different approach. These Fatherhood Community Access Program (FCAP) grants sought to broaden the reach of federally funded fatherhood programs by involving small, grassroots organizations that, due to their small size and limited administrative capacity, would be unlikely to effectively compete for direct federal support. OFA recognized that these smaller grassroots organizations possessed attributes that could significantly add value in the implementation of RF programs. Among their other assets, these small, community-based groups might have better access to underserved communities and populations than much larger, established organizations.

By supporting large lead organizations, a small number of Community Access grants broadened the reach of federal fatherhood programs by involving small grassroots organizations unable to compete for funding themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> The TANF program was renewed in the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005 (S.1932), which was signed by the President into law in February 2006. The TANF and Related Programs section of the DRA (Section 7103) authorizes the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), through the direct administration of the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), to provide competitive funding for demonstration projects promoting responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage in their communities.

The leaders of grassroots groups also may be better known in local communities and neighborhoods, thereby commanding a higher degree of trust than larger organizations. Smaller grassroots agencies also often possess a strong understanding of local priorities and needs, and they can leverage public investment through the use of volunteers who serve as participant mentors or in other capacities. This pilot program to support five organizations and a network of local partners was designed to test the belief that small organizations, while underused, could contribute important assets in the overall delivery of RF programs.

Nonetheless, in the wake of several recent federal initiatives, such as the Compassion Capital Fund, that were designed to support small grassroots organizations, OFA also recognized that grassroots organizations faced some limitations that could present challenges to effective participation in the Responsible Fatherhood program. These groups tended to have limited experience in applying for and managing public funds, and they were often under-developed administratively. Operating with few paid, professional staff, these organizations would have difficulty tracking data and establishing outcome measures – two key requirements of the federal policy approach.

To respond to these unique assets and challenges, OFA developed a highly innovative program structure to combine the strengths of both small and large organizations. The principle behind the Community Access program was simple: to leverage the administrative and professional staff and experience of larger non-profit or government entities on behalf of smaller grassroots fatherhood education programs. Under FCAP, large and more seasoned organizations would act as the fiscal agent for small grassroots programs, provide financial resources and technical assistance, and monitor program implementation and outcomes. These larger entities would recruit small organizations that ultimately would be responsible for direct service delivery with fathers and families. In each setting, the grassroots organizations would apply to receive sub-awards, mentoring, and administrative support from the larger agency, which would manage and help empower a network of RF projects.

This approach has merit as a program model based on several pertinent research studies. The idea of utilizing lead agencies as key technical assistance and supervisory organizations has proven constructive in areas such as workforce development, where larger agencies promote sustainability by linking diverse players within a community or region (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005). Within the federal government, the Compassion Capital Fund has utilized sub-award programs to deliver training and technical assistance that improve the performance of smaller

organizations. Such policies are helpful to small organizations in “enhancing their ability to provide social services, expanding their organizations, diversifying their funding sources, and creating collaborations to better serve those in need” (Compassion Capital Fund National Resource Center, 2003).

Leaders of grassroots groups may be better known in local communities and neighborhoods, thereby commanding a higher degree of trust than larger organizations. They also possess a strong understanding of local priorities and needs and can leverage public investment through the use of volunteers.

OFA published a funding opportunity announcement for the Community Access program in May 2006, offering \$7 million to larger organizations that made a commitment to assist grassroots groups in the delivery of high-quality RF programs. OFA sought proposals to support the replication of successful fatherhood programs and models, increase community outreach for RF programs, and build the capacity of service providers on the ground. While receiving direct federal funds, these grantees were also charged with providing technical assistance and administrative support to grassroots

partners. In designing the initiative, OFA required that at least 70 percent of total FCAP funds be reserved for competitive sub-awards to smaller organizations.

To assure that funding ultimately reaches small community-based organizations, OFA required that grassroots partners in these initiatives have six or fewer full-time employees, be headquartered in the communities they served, and have an annual social services budget of less than \$300,000. OFA also stipulated that at least 50 percent of financial assistance for grassroots partners go to direct services, with the balance reserved for organizational development, data collection and management, and administration. Grassroots partners were subject to the same requirements as FCAP grantees, including those related to voluntary program participation, activities to reduce domestic violence, and a ban on the use of funds for inherently religious activities. Finally, grassroots partners had to earn their awards through a full and open competitive process, to help assure the broadest possible reach and prevent large organizations from arbitrarily awarding funds to only a small number of existing grassroots networks.

In September, 2006, OFA awarded five cooperative agreements to organizations committed to implementing the FCAP model. These organizations were:

- Colorado Department of Human Services, Denver, CO



- Indiana Youth Institute, Indianapolis, IN
- Circle of Parents®, Chicago, IL
- Department of Human Services, Washington, D.C.
- Children's Institute, Inc., Los Angeles, CA.

This report provides an analysis on both the substance of the programs implemented by grantees as well as an in-depth assessment of the program model used to integrate grassroots organizations into RF program activities. It describes each grantee and its projects while exploring some of the strengths and weaknesses that emerged from the program model, as well as predictors of success and some recommendations for the future. The report also outlines the implementation challenges faced by grantees and how they adapted to these factors during the five-year project implementation period. Together, these projects had a broad reach, serving more than 50,000 fathers nationwide.

## Profiles of the Grantees

One of the most innovative factors in the FCAP demonstration is that all five of the funded grantees possess different characteristics as organizations. Collectively, they provided a rich tableau to test the effectiveness of lead organizations. The Colorado Department of Human Services is a state government agency, while the District of Columbia Department of Human Services is a locally run government entity. The three non-profits among the grantees have a diverse scope, including a locally based group (Children's Institute Inc.), a state-based organization (Indiana Youth Institute) and a national non-profit (Circle of Parents).

More information on each agency is described briefly in this section, and longer profiles of each grantee and its proposals are in Appendix B of the report. In addition, the chart below provides a brief sketch of the programs, their grant sizes, total number of sub-awardees, range of sub-grants, and number of fathers served.

**A Snapshot of the Community Access Grantees**

Agency	Colorado Dept. of Human Services	Circle of Parents®, Inc.	Children's Institute, Inc.	Indiana Youth Institute	D.C. Dept. of Human Services
Annual grant award size	\$2 million	\$1 million	\$1 million	\$999,000	\$2 million
Total # of sub-awardees over 5 years	63	48 (13 states, 35 local home visiting agencies)	50	Five local coalitions comprising 51 organizations	113
Dollar amount/ range of sub-grants	\$16,000-\$50,000 annually	\$20,000 to state CoP network members; \$50,000 to local home visiting programs	\$50,000	Up to \$161,000 per coalition and up to \$50,000 per organization annually	\$25,000-\$50,000
Total # fathers served over 5 years	6,300 (est.)	4,155	10,847	20,820	8,304

**Children's Institute, Inc.** (CII) has focused on healing children harmed by abuse or neglect, helping families provide nurturing homes, and advancing innovative child welfare programs for more than 100 years. Nearly 300 ethnically and linguistically diverse staff work in 25 CII direct service programs serving more than 10,000 individuals annually. At the core of the organization's approach is the Men in Relationships Groups (MIRG) curriculum, which involves weekly sessions that are open-ended and therapeutic to help fathers address past traumas that may interfere with

their effectiveness as parents. MIRG also provides education on child development, parenting skills, and discipline, while activities include case management, peer mentoring, job search assistance, and individual and family counseling. As part of its Community Access grant, the institute provided in-depth training on MIRG to the grassroots organizations selected for the project.

The **Colorado Department of Human Services** (CDHS) manages and delivers social services throughout the state. The state's two primary objectives through the grant were to strengthen the involvement and parenting skills of fathers of at-risk children through community-based direct services and to build system capacity and community awareness through state-level coordination and public outreach. CDHS housed the Community Access initiative under Colorado Works, the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program that provides public assistance to families in need. A chief goal of Colorado Works is to assist customers in becoming self-sufficient by strengthening the economic and social stability of families. The grant funded more than 40 fatherhood projects in the state, with the state providing monitoring, evaluation and technical assistance.

**Circle of Parents®** (CoP) is a national network of 29 regional and statewide non-profit organizations focused on the use of mutual self-help support groups to prevent child abuse and neglect and strengthen families in communities. Initial plans were to serve five state networks that, in turn, would support local sites providing direct services. In the second year, CoP planned to move toward a "train the trainer" model based on lessons learned from the first year of implementation, with expansion to additional state networks and local grassroots organizations. Through this approach, CoP was to develop a comprehensive training and technical assistance framework to help state and local home-visiting programs adopt more father-friendly approaches when serving low-income families.

The **District of Columbia Department of Human Services** (DCDHS) coordinates and provides a range of services to help Washington, D.C. residents improve their quality of life and achieve greater self-sufficiency. Through earlier investments in fatherhood programming, DCDHS had established network relationships with sub-awardees engaged in fatherhood programming and an existing system to provide competitive sub-awards to community-based organizations, including faith-based groups. The Community Access grant was designed to serve five "hot spots"— or five city wards where father absence and other dynamics most affect low-income families. DCDHS planned to work with its Office of Grants Management to support sub-awards

serving 2,500 fathers per year, including programs for teens and other at-risk fathers as well as special efforts targeting fathers of children who have disabilities, non-English speaking fathers, and fathers in need of intensive clinical case management.

**Indiana Youth Institute** (IYI) is a state-based youth development organization based in Indianapolis that serves children and youth by equipping and supporting “the people, institutions and communities” that impact youth well-being. Rather than serving as a direct service organization, IYI helps build the capacity of youth-serving organizations through technical assistance, financial support and capacity-building programs and activities. Other IYI initiatives include a college and career counseling initiative, mentoring, training and professional development workshops. With its Community Access grant funds, the agency was to identify and work with five coalitions of faith- and community-based organizations that would administer responsible fatherhood programming at the local level. Each coalition in turn would have five to eight “micro partners” of smaller organizations with annual budgets not exceeding \$300,000.

## Analysis and Outcomes: What the Grantees Learned

### Advantages of the Community Access Model

#### *Value of a Small Organization*

The performance of Community Access grantees and their sub-awardees highlights many advantages to the Community Access model. As several grantees noted, the strongest sub-awardees were nimble organizations that were able to pivot quickly to meet emerging needs. Many of these sub-awardees were small in size and “closer to the ground,” with networks and volunteers already in place. As noted by one grantee, Circle of Parents (CoP), many sub-awardees had access to a non-traditional audience resulting in a greater degree of “father friendliness” than that evident at larger, more bureaucratic agencies. Since some fathers may distrust large public systems, the sub-awardees provided a community-based, informal environment for men to obtain fatherhood and related services, including economic stability, parenting, and relationship supports.

Moreover, the combination of a large Community Access grantee well versed in fatherhood program requirements and smaller, more flexible community organizations proved a win-win for the program model.

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One example is at CoP, which provided intensive training to sub-awardees using the Father Friendly Check-up of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI). With a receptive audience of sub-awardees, this initiative fundamentally changed the culture of the grassroots organizations and, in some cases, their partners. As one local sub-awardee told CoP, “We can never go back to the way we were, now that we have dads involved and now that this learning has taken place.” CoP found that its programming was most effective when it reached deep into its sub-awardee partner organizations, including training for all staff members from bus drivers and maintenance workers to case managers. “Father-friendly work needs to extend to every level of the organization to have real impact,” a CoP leader said.

Many fathers also welcomed the ability to access services from sub-awardees located in a small neighborhood setting rather than going to a large, more intimidating government building or agency. As one official noted, “Smaller community-based organizations know the pulse of their communities. That makes a huge difference.” Larger organizations tend to focus on administrative issues and, as a result, “they can miss some things,” said a leader from CDHS.

Effective sub-awardees provided an alternative: a trusted neighborhood-based venue for fathers to obtain services in comfortable settings. Using grassroots groups as the point of entry into public systems “was better for everyone,” including clients, public program managers and staff.

Another federal grantee, the D.C. Department of Human Services (DCDHS), said smaller grassroots organizations were in many cases easier to work with than larger non-profits. Compared with larger, more bureaucratic organizations, the grassroots groups had fewer administrative barriers and were often more receptive to the partnership concept. DCDHS leveraged its work with a small group of previous grassroots partners by involving some of them as program mentors for sub-awardees, and involving staff from community-based organizations in monthly and quarterly training meetings.

### *Ability to Build State and Local Partnerships*

CDHS in particular said it was able to use its grant to create higher levels of cooperation and interoperability across a range of government programs and services. With the grant as an impetus, Colorado helped foster partnerships between fatherhood programs and state government programs including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and state offices for Child Support and Child Welfare. Since the Colorado governor’s office already had a strong interest in fatherhood programming, the timing of the grant was fortuitous. “It was like the perfect storm,” one official said. “The Community Access grant substantially increased state capacity for implementing responsible fatherhood programs. It allowed us to create a very robust state fatherhood council and establish partnerships with domestic violence prevention providers.” In particular, CDHS was able to reshape some institutional cultures at the state level to create or strengthen efforts to better engage men in programs that traditionally served mainly mothers and children.

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Progress also was evident at the local level in Colorado, as many grassroots sub-awardees were able to collaborate with publicly supported housing, drug and alcohol abuse, and Child Welfare and Child Support enforcement agencies. One benefit was an increase in Child Support collections, an accomplishment largely due to new partnerships between sub-awardees and local Child

Support enforcement agencies. As with Circle of Parents, CDHS saw a culture shift within agencies

toward a greater appreciation for the role of fathers. In many agencies, one official said, “There’s now a strong belief that fathers are important and represent part of the solution to child poverty.”

Indiana Youth Institute also reported that the grant improved collaboration at the local level. As a result, local fatherhood coalitions created through the grant were able to connect to the court system, United Way partners, ministerial associations, Child Welfare agencies and other programs. IYI had multiple staff working in the community to help facilitate referrals and connect with workforce development and corrections officials. In Evansville, IN, a local judge cited numerous stories about how grant programming positively impacted men in the community. In another city, a Corrections official championed the program’s positive effects. Such partnerships and endorsements “built immediate credibility in the community,” a lead staff member said.

CDHS said grantees and state/local partners also reaped gains in that they could reassess their service delivery and methods of operation. “The state was able to re-focus on what the target is,” one official said. Notably, the state agency conducted five different father engagement workshops for more than 200 Child Support caseworkers. “It was huge to see a paradigm shift in attitudes about what fathers could do.” In addition, child support efforts were largely enforcement based prior to the grant. CDHS reported that state and local agencies now are taking some different tactics with services for fathers. Significantly, the sub-awardees “are now part of the solution. Before, they weren’t looked at in that way.”

### *Organizational Development*

One consistently positive message from Community Access grantees is that these federal grants supported organizational development among the small project sub-awardees. Prior to award of these grants, few of these organizations were adept at obtaining and managing federal grants. As a result of support from the lead organizations, many of these sub-awardees now have the ability to seek their own funds, while understanding the administrative and reporting requirements involved in managing a federal grant. Most grantees agreed that this will promote organizational self-sufficiency in the long run. “These sub-awardees would not have been able to apply for funds on their own previously and did not know how to manage a grant,” a Colorado official said. “It made them more efficient and ready to move on to other things,” including data analysis, reporting and financial accountability.

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Children’s Institute, Inc. reported that many of its sub-awardees learned how to access free and low-cost resources from national organizations and clearinghouses as a result of assistance received through the grant. These links included access to public service announcements and the national fatherhood clearinghouse website – both of which will be important as the small organizations promote sustainability. Leaders at the D.C. Department of Human Services agreed, noting that many sub-awardees are “ready to do business” with other agencies and seek their own funds. The grassroots groups “would have had no chance” to compete against larger organizations prior to their participation in the Community Access grant.

Indiana Youth Institute said many of its sub-awardees are now able to self-evaluate their activities and obtain meaningful feedback from the monthly data they gather. The strongest grassroots organizations were willing to collaborate openly and work together to serve fathers and families. They also adopted a continuum of services to help meet as many of the men’s needs as possible, accomplished in part through coalition building and links to community partners.

“Our role was to support them,” an IYI official said, by promoting quality improvement and providing help to reach goals. “It is a community development model.” Because some sub-awardees were not prepared for this level of engagement initially, IYI retained a consultant to help design activities and quality improvement strategies.

“Capacity building was needed more than we thought.” In the words of one of IYI’s sub-awardees participating in a local fatherhood coalition, “It’s like they moved us from being an infant to a child to a teenager, and now we’re almost ready to get out there and try to make it as an adult.”

One “unexpected benefit” was the opportunity to see grassroots agencies use their local knowledge in recruiting and supporting fathers. As a result, the project “helped to educate our national organization about strategies for recruitment and engagement of fathers,” one official said.

Some grantees noted how they, with help from their sub-awardees, were able to achieve a greater degree of “father friendliness.” Several grantees said they were able to permanently shift the culture by helping fathers access services outside the large social service bureaucracy that some distrust.

For their part, some grantees said they reaped significant gains for their organizations from working with small grassroots agencies. As a national organization, Circle of Parents said it traditionally has relied on state-level organizations to help non-profits



and parents work on issues related to family functioning. However, one “unexpected benefit” of the program was the opportunity to see grassroots agencies use their local knowledge in recruiting and supporting fathers. As a result, this project “helped to educate our national organization about strategies for recruitment and engagement of fathers,” CoP’s leader said.

## Challenges of the Model and Grantee Responses

Despite considerable evidence of promise, grantees encountered some challenges with the Community Access model. In most cases, however, grantees were able to change their approach or develop accountability measures to better promote project success.

### *Administration and Recruitment*

One significant challenge was the inability of some sub-awardees to change or improve their programming to meet grant standards. Initially, some grassroots organizations had highly limited data-tracking capacity and were not open to technical support. Others had a lack of infrastructure and staff. Grantees responded to these challenges in a number of ways, most often by offering technical assistance and organizational support to improve sub-awardee performance. Children’s Institute, Inc. reported that, in many cases, day-to-day contact was needed to ensure that sub-awardees are following project goals. Such oversight sometimes required adjustments of time and staff. “We underestimated the amount of support they needed,” one CII official noted. In many cases, however, grantees also moved to terminate funding and relationships with grassroots organizations that did not want to alter their policies or practices.

Recruitment and retention of fathers were tougher challenges than expected, several grantees noted. In Colorado, grantee staff acknowledged, “We had a little bit of rose-colored glasses on.” To boost recruitment, the agency adopted an aggressive marketing and outreach effort using social media and the Internet. It designed a website that “wasn’t a typical government web site,” one official said. Content was published in both English and Spanish and totaled more than 200 pages. The site also included multiple videos with well-known dads that targeted both fathers and practitioners. A social media presence, *Be There for Your Kids*, built recognition for the project.

The District of Columbia Department of Human Services said some grassroots organizations lost their fathers early on because they were unable to provide employment counseling or jobs to participants. While many fathers wanted to connect or reconnect with their children, finding employment was often the primary reason for their participation. “However, many times they [the

sub-awardees] could not deliver on the jobs front and the fathers just tended to move on,” one official said. Once it identified this issue, DCDHS sought to address it by instituting monthly network meetings so sub-awardees could discuss the issue and explore potential solutions. The DCDHS grant director believed that these meetings helped agencies solve at least some of these problems and keep more men in their fatherhood programs, especially those that partnered informally with job-training initiatives.

### *Dealing with FBOs*

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) sometimes presented the thorniest challenges for grantees, as proselytizing in particular was an ongoing concern for some agencies. In Colorado, where FBOs represented about one-third of grassroots partners, some lacked understanding of federal grants and data reporting requirements. “Some FBOs weren’t really ready for oversight and didn’t understand it,” one official said. But Colorado overcame this challenge by conducting more site visits, often reviewing the faith-based guidelines and providing customized training and technical assistance to address the needs of struggling sub-awardees. Nonetheless, CDHS noted that some FBOs were among the top-performing sub-awardees. “They were some of the best organizations to work with. They were supportive and 100% into fatherhood.”

Other grantees reported FBO-related challenges as well. One FBO in Indiana repeatedly wanted to use an unallowable faith-based curriculum, and the issue was resolved only after the Indiana Youth Institute conducted extensive oversight and monitoring. In California, Children’s Institute, Inc. reported that some parents were reluctant to open up in front of religious leaders who were facilitating the program.

Challenges were not solely linked to FBOs, however. IYI noted that some sub-awardees did not want to provide the required eight hours of fatherhood curricula per the OFA requirement for all programs that are providing fatherhood workshops using this funding. Those that failed to make the required changes did not receive additional funding. “It was a hard transition” for some agencies, one IYI official said. “It was just a real battle that first year.” In extreme cases, IYI dissolved local coalitions that would not follow the prescribed policies. In Evansville, IN, for example, the institute terminated a coalition and re-assembled it later in the year with new, more supportive partners, who shared a full commitment to the initiative’s guidelines.

## *Data Collection and Evaluation*

One of the best ways to chart success of a program model is through data collection and evaluation. Yet due to limited staffing and infrastructure among sub-awardees, Community Access grantees encountered challenges that required them to respond proactively.

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“The basic evaluation questions weren’t being asked” at the sub-awardee level, said an official from Indiana Youth Institute. In response, IYI collected quarterly and annual reports, and by Year 3 it developed a process in which grantees presented annual program plans for approval or rejection. Failure to meet goals of an approved plan could result in loss of funds or exit from the program. In conjunction with an external evaluator,

IYI met semiannually with sub-grantees to examine the success of specific activities and programs. As a result of these interventions, sub-awardees were better able to make course corrections. The Institute also adopted a pay-for-performance strategy, approved by OFA, to reward high-achieving grassroots organizations.

Evaluation also was an important theme for Circle of Parents. CoP provided a self-assessment tool whereby sub-awardees would analyze their ability to provide services across seven key domains. After the assessment, organizations were required to compile an action plan. CoP then monitored progress on this plan, building it into its accountability and grant award structure.

The DHS in Washington, D.C., found that some sub-awardees weren’t reporting all of the people served by the program. After much review and analysis, officials found that some grassroots organizations misunderstood requirements, materials and reporting protocols. In response, the DCDHS sent staff into the field to promote more effective reporting. One finding was that sub-awardees were not counting fathers who had left the program for a while and then returned. It also saw the need to change its reporting tool, an Excel file. The new tool was Microsoft Word-based and featured some simplified reporting elements, which improved the level and quality of reporting by sub-awardees.

## *Program Fidelity*

Adhering to grantee curricula and expectations was another challenge. Children’s Institute, Inc. said some of its sub-awardees had difficulty following its recommended program model. One

example was in workshop delivery, where the Institute required co-facilitators including one with an advanced degree. Some grassroots groups could not meet this requirement, while others were unwilling to make the needed changes. “It was a constant battle to stress the fidelity of the model,” a CII official said. In addition, some sub-awardees were accustomed to delivering 10-15 workshops and then moving on to another group of men.

Yet CII’s model called on organizations to follow fathers after their initial programming and to provide encouragement and continued services. Some sub-awardees thought this approach would result in lower enrollments, though CII emphasized that men who participate over a long period of time continue to reap benefits and become effective recruiters for the program. To promote fidelity, CII said it conducted extensive site visits to outline its philosophy and encourage sub-awardees to follow this model. Like several other Community Access grantees, it collected monthly and quarterly feedback from sub-awardees, to support OFA reporting requirements.

CoP faced similar issues but found, as a national organization, that it was helpful to bring in state networks and contacts as a “middle level” of involvement and oversight for the small grassroots organizations. Since it had existing relationships across home visiting programs in 35 states, CoP said these state relationships were effective in helping it maximize grant efforts.

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In Washington, D.C., the district’s Department of Human Services sent out a team of case managers and grant management specialists to observe, monitor, and work with its sub-awardees. “Problems were solved on the ground in this way,” one official said. Sometimes the site visitors highlighted problems “that a sub-awardee didn’t know it had.” DHS’ monthly and quarterly network meetings also provided a platform to address common challenges and emphasize fidelity to the program model.

## Predictors of Success for Community Access Grantees

Successful Community Access grantees substantially improved their community-based partners' infrastructure and programming, met or exceeded the number of fathers and families they proposed to serve, and used performance measurement strategies to steadily improve outcomes. Based on the work of these grantees – and in comparing their proposals with their accomplishments – several key predictors of success emerged from the various program models. From a commitment to evidence-based technical assistance to a competitive sub-grant process, lead agencies that effectively met core outcomes in line with purposes of this OFA demonstration used specific strategies that impacted project outcomes.

### **Successful grantees placed a high priority on organizational strengthening.**

Community Access grantees that met the initiative's goals were not simply a “pass-through” organization providing funds for small grassroots agencies. Instead, they were proactive in providing technical assistance and supporting their sub-awardees.

- *Institutional mentoring:* The D.C. Department of Human Services established a mentor/mentee program to address challenges facing grassroots partners. It recruited, as mentors, leaders from other community organizations who had long-standing relationships with the city. Mentors did not have a financial stake in the Community Access grant; however, they had long-standing relationships with district government and agreed to provide mentoring on an informal but consistent basis. In some cases, they provided sub-awardees with advice and other counsel to help them successfully partner with the Department of Human Services—especially when the sub-awardees were small organizations lacking their own administrative expertise to perform federally required tasks.
- *Annual meetings:* Children's Institute, Inc. created an annual conference attended by its sub-awardees, as well as other strategic agencies from the community. This Fatherhood Solutions Conference drew more than 200 individuals initially, and attendance has increased to 500 for each of the past two years. Harnessing the strengths of additional community partners is often a critical ingredient for expanding early successes.
- *Site visits:* Grantees conducted site visits to sub-awardees to monitor fidelity to the program model, answer questions, and identify areas for improvement. These visits were essential for helping grantees deal with unexpected challenges in moving from planning to implementation. CDHS found it useful to conduct site visits with sub-awardees in their first

month of operation to promote fidelity to its program model. After it found cases of low grantee performance, the Indiana Youth Institute began a series of one-to-one visits and reviews that led to project improvements. Like other Community Access grantees, IYI, through site visits, was able to observe higher quality programs in the course of their regular visits. Over time, what initially was defined as ‘connecting with dads’ activities became rigorous programming based on evidence-based practices, featuring consistent reporting.

- *Targeted TA opportunities:* In addition to regular oversight, the CDHS offered monthly webinars for sub-awardees to brief them on programmatic and administrative requirements. CDHS also conducted an annual Fatherhood Academy, initially focused on grant requirements, but later broadened to include expert speakers. Grantees also had to receive training on data reporting, domestic violence, sustainability, fund-raising, and board management.
- *Strategic tools and resources:* Indiana Youth Institute designed an information-rich, 8-page intake form so that sub-awardees could collect extensive information on all new program participants. The form captured basic demographic, education and employment information while also including four pages focused on the father’s parenting background and overview of current relationships. To complement this pre-intervention form, IYI also designed a 7-page outtake form that examines changes among clients in areas such as fatherhood and parenting. (For more information, see Appendix A of this report.)
- *Domestic violence supports:* Circle of Parents designed the 5-page bulletin, *Is Your Agency ‘DV-Ready’?* to help sub-awardees assess their capacity to deliver domestic violence prevention programs. The document includes specific standards and asks clear, direct questions to improve many different facets of an organization, from personnel policies and internal record policies to its reception areas and waiting rooms. (For more information, see Appendix A).

**Successful grantees were able to link to other organizations and, more importantly, help grassroots agencies make such connections.**

Grantees reported greater project success when they were able to connect with court systems, workforce agencies, departments of correction, United Way partners, Child Welfare agencies, and other programs.

- *Community asset-mapping:* To help its sub-awardees, the Colorado Department of Human Services developed a spreadsheet of potential partner agencies in most cities and towns. The

agency also made direct efforts to link grassroots groups with many of these agencies. Colorado also used marketing to help recruitment efforts, designing content-rich websites and posting information at Department of Motor Vehicles offices. “Partners and fathers learned that they’re not alone,” said a CDHS official said.

- *Referral network:* Children’s Institute, Inc. used its contacts with mental health providers, probation offices, housing agencies, and the court system to help men deal with a variety of issues. Although some referrals required a fee or a trip to a distant agency, CII was able to get some organizations to come directly into sub-awardee offices to provide services. Such work made it more likely to serve men “who are sometimes daunted” by visiting a large social service organization or government agency.
- *Field contacts:* The Indiana Youth Institute deployed field staff members to facilitate referrals and connections to personnel from corrections, workforce development, and other agencies. IYI paid for its field staff largely through matching funds, so their benefit to the fatherhood program supplemented the federal government’s investment.
- *Linking participants to related services:* The D.C. Department of Human Services assigned three case managers to the grant who helped sub-awardees refer fathers to substance abuse, domestic violence prevention, child support and other needed services.

### **Successful grantees used assessments, evaluations, and data to track project impact.**

As they gained more experience with the Community Access program model, grantees adopted a variety of strategies to assess progress, including assessments and site visits.

- *Assessment data:* The Colorado Department of Human Services used pre- and post-assessments for all fathers across 16 domains ranging from self sufficiency to healthy parenting. Officials said the data were generally positive, as they saw changes in attitudes not only among men but among practitioners – some of whom overcame biases and began to see the important roles played by fathers.
- *Reporting tools:* The Colorado Department of Human Services designed a concise quarterly data reporting form that asks sub-awardees for a progress report on their work, an overview of programmatic or personnel changes, a discussion of problems/barriers, and a planning form for the next three-month period.

- *Inventory data:* Children’s Institute, Inc. used a pre- and post-program fatherhood inventory, a child behavior checklist, and a parenting stress index to review family health and father/child interaction. The project then conducted regular technical assistance sessions with sub-awardees to examine the data and suggest changes in workshops and activities.
- *Participant evaluation:* Circle of Parents had sub-awardees examine the effectiveness of fatherhood classes to determine changes in men’s behavior. It also developed a relationship-based survey through which more than 60% saw positive changes in parent/child relationships and fathers’ self-management skills.

**Successful grantees had screening mechanisms both to recruit, and, when necessary to replace, sub-awardees.**

Most grantees used a request-for-proposal (RFP) process to award funds to grassroots organizations from year to year. This approach mirrored the federal competitive framework in that unbiased reviewers scored proposals and helped the lead agencies to engage sub-awardees and replace some agencies from year to year.

- *External reviews:* Like several programs, Circle of Parents established an outside grant review panel to review applications from potential sub-awardees and make recommendations to CoP leaders based on local organizations’ proposal, commitment to the program’s goals, fatherhood experiences, organizational qualifications, etc.
- *Target underperformers:* After conducting site visits and reviewing program-level data, Indiana Youth Institute replaced some low-performing grassroots organizations. Often these were grassroots organizations that were not ready for the high level of engagement required by the grant.
- *Stricter oversight:* In reviewing local progress, many grantees developed more formal evaluation plans and required action plans of the sub-awardees – policies that helped strengthen fidelity to the program and model.
- *Self-improvement effort:* Colorado developed a 10-page audit form that allows a supervisor or funder to conduct a comprehensive audit of a sub-awardees’ practices and procedures. Topics focus on program deliverables, management practices, recruiting and training of participants, and the work of the organization’s Board of Directors.



### **Successful grantees and sub-awardees both had experienced leaders.**

In detailed phone discussions for this report, it was evident that there were certain indicators of success based on the deployment of qualified staff by grantees and sub-awardees. Many lead agencies relied heavily on seasoned staff with multiple decades of program oversight experience.

- *Skilled grantees:* Most of the grantees had leaders who were well versed in federal grant oversight and providing technical assistance. This work made it possible for grantees to provide one-to-one and small group assistance to grassroots organizations.
- *Dedicated staff:* Successful sub-awardees often had full-time or nearly full-time fatherhood coordinators who could play a central role in developing programming and making adjustments in activities and services. Often, dedicated program personnel or newly hired staff were important; one grantee noted that fatherhood simply can't be "an add-on job" for existing staff who may have many other responsibilities.
- *Effective networking:* With grantees as facilitators, effective grassroots organizations were able to network with each other to discuss common issues. While outreach to fathers was a key strategy for success, one grantee said the informal outreach and networking among sub-awardees helped these front-line organizations solve problems on their own. *Effective outreach:* Leaders saw value in designing public outreach and awareness activities. CDHS designed a website, [www.coloradodads.com](http://www.coloradodads.com), with information on local fatherhood programs in Colorado, searchable by region, keyword and full listing. It also established a blog, Spanish content, Resources, News, Events, Special Offers, and a "Family Zone."

## Recommendations for the Future

With Community Access grantees finishing their federally funded projects in 2011, this review gathers extensive information about the successes and challenges of the model and spotlighted program ingredients likely to produce successful replication of this model in the future. In addition to highlighting successes at the five grantee agencies, discussions with grantees also sought to identify possible changes in the Community Access program should OFA fund additional grants for this purpose. Grantees were candid in suggesting policies, programs, and approaches that could promote even stronger programs involving larger, mature service organizations and their smaller grassroots partners. They believed strongly that the Community Access model has particular value, in that it can reach “deeper” into communities by drawing upon distinct benefits of local experts, grassroots community-based organizations and committed volunteers. As implemented from 2006 to 2011, the model also appears to support OFA’s goals for inter-agency partnerships and inter-operability programming.

Possible suggestions for future action included these observations from grantees:

### **Institute a planning period for projects.**

Community Access agencies said that future grants from the federal government might be strengthened by including a planning period that could benefit both the grantee and its sub-awardees. At Circle of Parents, leaders said they had to rewrite their initial methodology for selecting grassroots organizations to assure full compliance with federal guidelines and open competition. A planning period, prior to implementation, would give the agency time to make these changes. In addition, a planning period also would give grantees more time to work with grassroots organizations on project activities, expectations, and reporting requirements.

### **Promote a baseline program evaluation and the establishment of clear outcomes.**

Community Access grantees expressed a definitive need to set clear, measurable objectives and to collect consistent and uniform data. Many grantees gradually adopted these concepts, but the process was not smooth in all cases. One key ingredient in this area is for grantees and sub-awardees to have consistent data systems in place to promote data reporting and evaluation.

### **Site visits and oversight from the Community Access grantee level are essential.**

Over time, project grantees said they were largely able to develop sound oversight plans to monitor sub-awardees. Some agencies provided mentors, others conducted monthly or quarterly

networking meetings, while others relied on one-to-one meetings and evaluator site visits. Grantees noted that these policies are essential to work with sub-awardees that may have vastly different levels of grant management experience and administrative capacity.

**Provide “father friendliness” at all levels.**

Several grantees said every level of an organization – both Community Access grantees and sub-awardees – may need training and professional development to promote father friendliness.

“There needs to be holistic organizational buy-in,” one official said, and any program incentives supporting this goal would be a welcome addition.

**Promote the use of referral networks.**

Grantees said it is essential to develop a resource network prior to funding grassroots organizations so that these agencies have a go-to list to obtain assistance and referrals. Some grantees had—and used—broader networks than others, and offered some consistent requirement for utilizing field staff. In addition, other federal programs or long-established networks could enhance program recruiting.

## Conclusion

In 2006, OFA offered a potentially innovative method to recruit grassroots organizations in the delivery of Responsible Fatherhood programs to men with many different risk factors. This Community Access model was a unique approach that funded large, more established organizations that, in turn, provided grants, technical assistance, and oversight to small grassroots agencies. In the five years that followed, grantees supported more than 200 small, grassroots organizations that work “on the front lines” to promote responsible fatherhood. While offering an appealing ‘father-friendly’ message to their communities, these small agencies also faced a myriad of challenges, including but not limited to undeveloped administrative capacity, data collection and reporting challenges, and lack of familiarity with government programs.

With carefully structured, OFA-supported oversight, however, Community Access grantees helped these small sub-awardees make considerable strides in providing effective, “community-based” fatherhood enhancement programs. An experienced set of lead agencies promoted stronger local practices by providing extensive technical assistance in ways that strengthened the capacity of the grassroots organizations and their fatherhood programs. Grantees also promoted quality through a competitive sub-awardee grant process, a commitment to objectives and outcomes, a willingness to terminate poor-performing grassroots agencies, and a quality-control program that included site visits, mentoring, and other techniques to monitor progress. By undertaking these strategies, Community Access grantees were able to forge a unique program model that complements other OFA fatherhood strategies and appears worthy of expansion and replication. With suggested refinements to the program model in areas such as pre-implementation planning, a renewed emphasis on objectives and data collection, increased monitoring, and development of local resource networks, the Community Access initiative is poised to achieve even greater success in the years ahead.

**Appendix A:**  
**Resources from the Field**

The five Community Access grantees active in supporting grassroots organizations from 2006 to 2011 developed a variety of resources that are potentially useful for the Responsible Fatherhood field. Included here are the key resources and lessons learned taken from interviews and document reviews from the intermediaries individually and collectively. They range from domestic violence protocols to effective intake/outtake forms, data reporting, advice for child support partnerships, and outreach materials.

### **Indiana Youth Institute Intake Form**

The Indiana Youth Institute created a user-friendly 8-page intake form for all new Community Access program participants. Similar to a typical intake, this form efficiently captures demographic information, general background, education, and employment/financial information. However, it also includes more than four pages devoted to the incoming participant's parenting background, as well as a comprehensive relationship overview. This is an especially useful resource for new fatherhood programs interested in "strengthening" the data they capture about parenting and relationships status. More information: [www.iyi.org](http://www.iyi.org).

### **Indiana Youth Institute Outtake Form**

This is a "corresponding" 7-page form for those who participate in IYI-related fatherhood, parenting, and economic stability programs. The outtake form tracks client changes in each major area, offering an opportunity for participants, or those conducting an exit interview, to address in detail positive or negative changes in parenting as well as strengths of the fathers' relationships. More information: [www.iyi.org](http://www.iyi.org).

### **Circle of Parents Domestic Violence Protocol**

CoPs 5-page instruction guide for community-based program leaders is useful for those who want to integrate anti-domestic violence procedures in their local initiatives. The guide recommends an emergency response plan, essential training protocols, a resources overview, and clear instructions for staff members who may learn of abuse and are then called upon to respond appropriately. The protocol also includes confidentiality/privacy guidelines, and is useful for supporting community-based partners and larger agencies alike. More information: [www.circleofparents.org](http://www.circleofparents.org).

## **Circle of Parents Resources to Support Staff When They Encounter Families Experiencing Domestic Violence**

In a 2-page collection of suggested resources, CoP includes links to key organizations long involved in ameliorating domestic violence. These include Futures Without Violence, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse, the Safe Start Center, the Child Welfare Information Gateway, the Strong Fathers Program, and the Center for Child and Family Health. More information: [www.circleofparents.org](http://www.circleofparents.org).

## **Circle of Parents Engaging Fathers in Home Visiting (Newsletter)**

This 10-page newsletter focuses on the ways a unique Circle of Parents initiative facilitated home visitation by non-residential fathers in seven nationwide program settings. The newsletter summarizes insights and experiences from various programs in Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Kansas and other locations. The write-up includes surprising lessons from this new field, which has, in the past, primarily supported mothers. It also notes that over 2,200 expecting fathers of infants, and over 1,500 fathers of 1- to 5-year old children, were involved in this program. More information: [www.circleofparents.org](http://www.circleofparents.org).

## **Circle of Parents “Is Your Agency ‘DV-Ready’?”**

This 5-page “bulletin” provides concrete standards for programs, allowing them to determine their domestic violence prevention capacity. The document asks clear, direct questions aimed at improving organizations’ reception areas and waiting rooms, personnel policies, programmatic considerations, internal records policies, workforce development, and readiness to report harm or threats. It represents a useful resource for new and longstanding family-strengthening programs alike. More information: [www.circleofparents.org](http://www.circleofparents.org).

## **Colorado DHS - Coaching Young Men in the Quest to End Teen Dating Violence**

DHS’ 1-page synopsis of clear insights is taken primarily from MVP Strategies and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. The flyer summarizes 10 things young men can do to end gender violence in their communities, and it includes a reference to the Colorado Men Against Domestic Violence campaign, as well as the Community Access initiative. This resource is a strong

example that combines useful content with an organization's interest in positive public relations. More information: [www.coloradodads.com](http://www.coloradodads.com).

### **Colorado DHS Quarterly Data Report Form**

This concise 1-page form offers clear reporting instructions for the Community Access partners working in partnership with Colorado DHS. The template promotes consistency in reporting across diverse community-based sub-awardees by asking each partner to provide a program summary, a progress report on that quarter's work, an overview of changes, a discussion of problems/barriers, a description of that quarter's achievements, and a quarterly planning form for the three months ahead. It is a useful template for bringing together data from wide-ranging faith-based and community sub-awardees. More information: [www.coloradodads.com](http://www.coloradodads.com).

### **Colorado DHS Responsible Fatherhood Program Audit Form**

This 10-page audit form allows an outside analyst or others (including a supervisor or funder) to conduct a comprehensive "audit" of a sub-awardee's internal practices and procedures. The template focuses on core program deliverables, the organization's Board of Directors, management practices regarding personnel (including recruiting, training, and volunteers), fiscal policies and other services. It also provides ample space for an auditor to offer follow-up recommendations based on findings. Overall, this is a useful form for any arrangement resembling the Community Access model. More information: [www.coloradodads.com](http://www.coloradodads.com).

### **Colorado DHS "12 Tips for Dads" to Use When Working with Child Support**

This 2-sided "postcard" offers practical tips for fathers navigating the state of Colorado's Child Support system, which also provides a link to the Colorado Dads Program. The postcard is available both in Spanish and in English (as are several Colorado DHS program resources). More information: [www.coloradodads.com](http://www.coloradodads.com).

### **Colorado DHS Responsible Fatherhood "Bulletins"**

These diverse 1- or 2-page bulletins offer practical insights for fathers on numerous topics. Each one can easily be posted on a social service agency's bulletin board, in meeting rooms, in restrooms, or even handed out with other program materials. Each bulletin addresses one topic, on subjects that include: *Creating Emotional Connections with Your Son*, *Establishing Paternity*, *How*



*to Raise a Street Smart Child, Being an “Askable” Adult, and Top 10 Outdoor Activities for Colorado Dads and Kids to Do This Summer.* Since they note or emerge from resources beyond Colorado’s Responsible Fatherhood Community Access program, these bulletins reflect a Department of Human Services that is skillfully working together. Concise insights are clearly presented, and links are made to related information and follow-up opportunities. More information: [www.coloradodads.com](http://www.coloradodads.com).

**Appendix B:**  
**Summaries of Community Access Grant Projects**

Appendix B provides more in-depth information on the five Community Access grantees. This information is taken from their original proposals and in-depth phone interviews with agencies in summer and fall 2011, as they neared the end of their grants.

## **District of Columbia Department of Human Services**

### *Organizational Profile*

The District of Columbia Department of Human Services (DCDHS) is a public agency that coordinates and provides a range of services for economic and socially challenged residents to enhance their quality of life and achieve greater self-sufficiency. The Department consists of two administrations: the Income Maintenance Administration (IMA) and the Family Services Administration (FSA). The mission of IMA is to determine the eligibility of applicants and re-certify eligible recipients for federal and District-funded assistance programs, and to help heads of households receiving TANF benefits to become employed and move toward financial independence. FSA provides protection, intervention, and wide-ranging social services to help meet the needs of vulnerable adults and low-income families by reducing risk and promoting self-sufficiency.

### *Proposal Summary*

In 2006, DCDHS was awarded a \$2 million annual grant (alongside \$200,000 in DCDHS matching funds) to build upon its existing DC Fatherhood Initiative, a program that served 1,000 low-income fathers per year over the past decade. Because of the earlier investments, DCDHS had an established network of relationships with sub-awardees engaged in fatherhood programming and an existing system for providing competitive sub-awards to community-based organizations, including faith-based groups. Due to a high rate of TANF enrollment and families impacted by domestic violence, DCDHS also had well-established partnerships with social, human service, and domestic violence agencies to serve citizens in the city Wards most affected by poverty and at-risk behaviors. DCDHS' Community Access initiative, twice the size of its former fatherhood program, was designed to serve five "hot spots"—five DC Wards where father-absence and other dynamics most affected low-income families. A group of seven faith- and community-based organizations (FBCOs) committed to work with DCDHS in administering the new program, giving it greater access to unskilled teens, court-adjudicated youth, low-income families, and adult ex-offenders. DCDHS planned to work with its Office of Grants Management (OGM) to support sub-awards serving 2,500 fathers per year—including not only traditional programs for teens and at-risk

fathers but also special efforts targeting dads with children who have disabilities, non-English speaking fathers, and fathers in need of intensive clinical case management.

DCDHS planned to distribute \$1.4 million each year in competitive sub-awards to 20-28 local FBCO programs, each with a total agency budget of \$300,000 or less per year. After completing the funding process, DCDHS designed assistance for sub-awardees in areas such as domestic violence prevention, grant oversight and management.

### *Implementation Plan and Objectives*

To successfully implement this larger initiative, DCDHS relied on its own local offices to train and equip sub-awardees and provide oversight. These internal offices included the DC Strong Families Program Division, the Teen Parent Assessment Project, and the Developmental Disabilities State Planning Council. By clearly articulating its program goals, DCDHS worked with its OGM to collect outcome-based data from its sub-awardees and to involve its senior program staff in making modifications where appropriate. One particularly challenging area was the program's data collection, where the city sought to overcome limited data-collection capacities at many of the small sub-grantee organizations.

One important objective was to establish a competitive RFP process for sub-awardees serving at-risk teenage fathers in the five city wards covered by the program. Others were to expand existing programs and strengthen capacity and programming of sub-awardees, particularly their ability to work independently or with partners to provide employment and training opportunities.

## **Indiana Youth Institute**

### *Organizational Profile*

Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) is a state-based youth development organization that serves Indiana children and youth by equipping and supporting "the people, institutions and communities that impact [youth] well-being." Rather than providing direct services, IYI helps build the capacity of youth-serving organizations through technical assistance, financial support, and a wide range of capacity-building programs and activities. Based in Indianapolis, IYI's key initiatives include a college and career counseling initiative, a mentoring and Kids Count Media project, training and professional development workshops, research supports, and other region-specific initiatives.

## *Proposal Summary*

In 2006, IYI received an annual federal grant of \$999,000 (matched by \$111,000 in IYI resources) to identify and work with five coalitions of faith-based and community organizations (FBCOs) that would administer responsible fatherhood programming in local communities. IYI evaluated the performance of coalitions to determine whether agencies received continued funding. It used an RFP process to select partners in different regions of the state and approved coalition activities such as fatherhood symposiums, community mobilization workshops on fatherhood, community action plans, direct service delivery, and participation in IYI evaluation activities.

By design, each community-based coalition involved 5-8 “micro partners” of smaller faith-based and community organizations, with annual budgets not exceeding \$300,000. The guiding concept was to work with local grassroots organizations with direct access to people in low-income, father-absent communities based on the premise that small FBCOs are typically groups without capacity to compete for and win a federal fatherhood grant on their own. IYI identified micro-partners that served diverse clients and had a desire to work together as part of a fatherhood coalition with a strong emphasis on community collaboration. Each sub-awardee was required to fully participate in community mobilization summits, in IYI’s annual fatherhood summit, and in the program evaluation. Finally, to help motivate broader interest in the priority of Responsible Fatherhood initiatives, IYI also held one-day fatherhood “symposiums” in each of five state regions it sought to target: Gary, Indianapolis, Ft. Wayne, Evansville, and Lawrenceburg.

To promote an in-depth review of applications, IYI enlisted the assistance of 20 statewide reviewers to evaluate proposals. After initial sub-awardees were selected in early 2007, IYI made available its senior staff as well as a domestic violence expert to support each coalition in developing concrete action plans to promote healthy father involvement in their community. Drawing on its own experiences, IYI supported micro-partners in setting goals, promoting program design and accountability, and linking activities to evaluation. While each regional coalition developed unique areas of focus, the coalitions were each required to organize and host their own local RF leadership summit, develop an action plan, and participate in a statewide grantee progress meeting. Each FBCO was also required to implement a Domestic Violence Protocol and certifications of compliance with voluntary participation and compliance with federal regulations affecting faith-based organizations. The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) developed and implemented a comprehensive data-measurement tool to help track results and measure key program benchmarks.

### *Implementation Plan and Objectives*

In selecting and supporting coalition micro-partners, IYI closely monitored sub-awardees in a range of program management areas. Each month, a full-time IYI Program Administrator collected core performance data from each micro-partner coalition. IYI's Program Director then provided quarterly reports to the coalitions, showing how their current performance compared to other micro-partners and to each coalition's proposed goals.

IYI also held monthly meetings by phone to build support and expertise among local coalitions. In addition, all five coalitions participated in an annual meeting at IYI offices in Indianapolis, where they shared strategies with one another, interacted directly with IYI's program evaluator, discussed ways to improve performance, and participated in mandatory training with IYI expert consultants. Beyond IYI staff, these meetings provided opportunities for coalitions to meet and network with other state officials such as the Director of the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. In this way, IYI used its reach to benefit its micro-partners throughout the state.

During each semi-annual reporting period, the IYI program director visited each coalition to observe activities and provide follow-up guidance, support and accountability. An annual evaluation form contained questions on local fatherhood workshops among other focus areas. Additionally, IYI offered the coalitions website support and other marketing advice and compiled results into a clear report for OFA.

Project objectives included a broad, open, and competitive RFP process with 20 reviewers scoring applications, with awards provided to five micro-partners. IYI also conducted annual re-competitions for funds based on micro-partners' performance and conducted semi-annual site visits to monitor program quality.

### **Children's Institute, Inc.**

#### *Organizational Profile*

For more than 100 years (since 1906) the Children's Institute, Inc. (CII) has focused on increasing awareness of child maltreatment, early childhood education, and mental health issues in and around Los Angeles County. Today, nearly 300 ethnically and linguistically diverse staff work in 25 CII direct service programs to serve more than 10,000 individuals annually. CII services cover treatment, prevention, early care and education, and community services. Overall management is

provided by a Board of Trustees. CII contracts with a wide range of public and private agencies providing child welfare, mental health, and senior services among others. CII has two main facilities, one in central Los Angeles and another in south Los Angeles County, as well as numerous satellite locations throughout the most impacted neighborhoods. Prior to applying for the OFA Responsible Fatherhood Community Access grant, CII operated Project Fatherhood, an initiative that had served over 1,300 fathers and children with its Men in Relationships Groups (MIRG) curriculum.

### *Proposal Summary*

CII designed its fatherhood programs with a basic philosophy to help low-income fathers through a therapeutic group process so that they build healthy relationships by honestly engaging core life issues. This holistic approach operated along several program tracks that worked together to increase overall involvement by fathers in childrearing.

CII centered its Responsible Fatherhood programming on the Men in Relationships Groups (MIRG) curriculum. MIRG involved weekly sessions that were open-ended and therapeutic in helping fathers address past traumas that interfere with their effectiveness as parents. MIRG also provided education on child development, parenting skills and discipline as well as a host of supportive services. Participation in CII programs involved a sequenced set of services including father-child intake/case management, individual and family counseling, peer mentoring, job search assistance, financial literacy training, and referrals to public and private service providers for supports CII did not pay for directly.

### *Implementation Plan and Objectives*

CII's federal grant was designed to expand its service network in partnership with grassroots organizations that provided direct fatherhood services. Each year, CII sought to support 10-15 organizations with funding, training, and technical assistance over a five-year period.

Organizations were invited to apply for support through a Request for Statement of Qualifications. Those groups not selected for funding in their first applications remained eligible for future rounds of funding.

Following the selection of grassroots partners, CII provided a 5-day Training Institute that briefed at least one representative from each organization on the MIRG process. The objective was not only to train facilitators but also to create coaches who had actual experience with the MIRG program and could speak to its transformative quality from a personal perspective. CII also

proposed the creation of a Fatherhood Resource Center to serve as a physical library of materials and support for the grassroots organization and provided intensive training and technical assistance, including clinical supervision, to all grassroots programs. Over the entire 5-year project, CII's target was to support 50-75 MIRG groups, serving an average of 12 fathers each—yielding services that were delivered to approximately 600-900 fathers and families.

One goal of the project was to increase the extent and quality of day-to-day father/child interactions, as indicated by a 10 percent increase on the Father Inventory from pre-test to post-test. Other objectives were to increase employability of fathers, improve their conflict resolution skills, and foster increased cooperation in parenting among participating fathers and mothers. Additional objectives were to:

- Maintain substance abuse recovery among fathers with substance abuse histories;
- Reduce behavioral issues among participating children; and
- Improve school performance among participants' school-age children.

## Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)

### *Organization Profile*

The grantee for the project was the Colorado Department of Human Services, which manages and delivers social services statewide from its base in Denver. Grant responsibility fell to the department's Colorado Works Division, which houses the state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and provides public assistance to families in need. Colorado Works is designed to assist customers in becoming self-sufficient by strengthening the economic and social stability of families. As part of its responsibilities, CDHS monitored 63 fatherhood projects, offering evaluation and other technical assistance.

### *Proposal Summary*

The agency based its grant design on a goal to improve the wellbeing of children by building community access across Colorado to fatherhood programs and services. This work included activities to raise the parenting skills of fathers of at-risk children and increase the involvement and skills of these fathers through community-based direct services. The project also sought to build system capacity and community awareness through state-level coordination and public outreach activities.



The grant also leaned on an existing, cross-agency Fatherhood Council with representatives from the Human Service Divisions of Child Support, TANF and Child Welfare, the Department of Corrections, the Coalition against Domestic Violence, Colorado State University Extension, Denver Department of Human Services, and multiple private faith and community based non-profits, among others.

### *Implementation Plan and Objectives*

To increase fathers' skills, the state provided funds and training to local community programs providing direct services. Local grantees were to establish collaborations with other local entities including "a domestic violence provider, a local workforce program, a local mental health provider and the local county department of social or human services to set protocol and meet individual requirements." The model for the grant design was used successfully by other human services providers in Colorado, and state officials believed it allowed for innovation and customization based on the needs of communities.

To build community awareness and system capacity, CDHS planned a broad public awareness campaign, including a responsive website for both fathers and practitioners with information about services, programs, and support for fathers, and an annual training academy on fatherhood. The grant also promoted development and utilization of a Management Information System, tracking outcomes from administrative data and plans to conduct a qualitative study.

Reviews and evaluations found that the state agency has continued to strengthen many collaborations and partnerships, with a particular focus on domestic violence prevention. An October 2010 report noted that compliance was a focus of state monitoring efforts. "Programs that did not receive monies for Year 4 demonstrated resistance to compliance with program requirements for ... Year 3," the report noted. An accountability process, implemented in 2009, helped improve compliance. After the state placed a moratorium on all statewide conferences regardless of funding source, CDHS held four regional trainings in November 2009 using a peer roundtable format.

To promote program fidelity, CDHS became more proactive over time through activities such as a formal orientation program for new programs and a site visit conducted by the state within the first month of the award. The state also provided trainings for child welfare caseworkers.

To promote awareness, the state designed a website, [www.coloradodads.com](http://www.coloradodads.com), with information on local fatherhood programs searchable by region and keyword. It also established a blog,

“Family Zone” and content delivered in Spanish. The site has offered research and data, including the program’s own evaluation report, with service provider access via log in. Also, the project has developed a public awareness campaign, “Be There for Your Kids”, plus annual fatherhood awards. The project has presented at multiple conferences and events and conducted webinars.

## Circle of Parents

### *Organizational Profile*

Circle of Parents (CoP), based in Chicago, is a national network of 29 regional and statewide non-profit organizations dedicated to the use of mutual self-help support groups as a means of preventing child abuse and neglect and strengthening families in communities. The organization has a national board of directors that includes both professional staff and parents and seeks to fully leverage human and material resources across the network. CoP sets network standards and principles for self-help parent support groups, oversees self-assessment processes for state networks, provides training curricula and manuals, and maintains a system of electronic and in-person technical assistance.

### *Proposal Summary*

CoP’s Responsible Fatherhood grant developed a comprehensive training and technical assistance (T/TA) program for local home visiting programs. The overarching objectives of the proposal were two-fold. First, CoP wanted to promote responsible parenting among new and expectant fathers, including married and unmarried fathers whose spouses and partners received home visiting services, with an initial focus on programs operated by Healthy Families America (HFA) and Parents as Teachers (PAT). Second, in recognition of the important role of fathers in the development of children and the existence of systemic biases against father involvement, CoP sought to influence systems – public and private – to adopt more father-friendly approaches to serving low-income families. CoP established desired outcomes such as expanded involvement of fathers to improve child well-being, reduced negative father-child behaviors, and improved parenting skills and relationships between fathers and their spouses.

To achieve these goals, CoP sought to replicate a self-help support model using the Conscious Fathering (CF) curricula from the Parent Trust for Washington Children. The curricula combined self-help with educational sessions to equip participants with information and skills in family violence prevention, child abuse prevention, child development, conflict resolution and effective discipline. CoP also proposed working with fathers to: improve understanding of the financial,

legal and emotional responsibilities of fathers; improve self-management around anger and communication; and help fathers understand resources available to them through other government and community-based organizations. CoP developed a diverse set of partners to implement this model including HFA, PAT, the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), CoP state affiliates, domestic violence experts, and local grassroots non-profit organizations that served as the front-line service delivery system.

CoP proposed a multi-level program structure that involved tasks carried out at the national, regional/state, and local levels. National-level tasks were those that cut across all domains of activity (T/TA, curricula, research and evaluation, financial assistance) while regional and state partners worked to build their capacity around fatherhood education and training programs. Local organizations funded through the grant would benefit from resources provided through the CoP national team as well as more direct capacity building and T/TA from regional/state partners.

## Implementation Plan and Objectives

The CoP national advisory committee conducted overall project management, the selection and funding of pilot sites and expansion sites, development of T/TA programs, and the implementation of process and outcome evaluations of the project. CoP identified the 3,400 organizations that make up HFA and PAT programs nationwide as those eligible to apply for financial assistance and T/TA funded through the grant.

In the first year, CoP proposed to select five state networks to receive T/TA that, in turn, would support at least two local sites that provided direct responsible fatherhood services. The state networks were to receive \$20,000 to cover program costs and train staff on how to support the grassroots fatherhood programs. CoP issued a competitive RFP to fund grassroots programs with a cap of \$50,000 to serve at least 50 fathers per site. CoP also proposed hosting a multi-day training on the CF curriculum and follow-up electronic TA for the state networks and grassroots organizations. Results from the first year would be used to shape the second year's program.

In the second year, CoP moved toward a "train the trainer" approach based on lessons learned from the first year of implementation. During the second year, CoP proposed instituting its evaluation of participant outcomes including participant focus groups, a retrospective pre-test

model of participants<sup>2</sup>, surveys, and interviews with site administrators to assess the impact on participants of services and T/TA.

The third-year plan included expansion across the HFA and PAT state networks as well as other home visiting programs. An additional five new states were envisioned for year 3 along with 10 new grassroots organizations, and CoP planned to develop and implement a “tool-kit” for fathers with a variety of resources to help fathers care of infants and children. Years four and 5 plans were to focus on continuing to expand the number of networks funded through the grant by an additional 20 sites and 10 state networks. Objectives were to make 50 awards to grassroots organizations, reaching 2,500 fathers.

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<sup>2</sup> This type of survey tests participant knowledge after the introduction to the program which is believed to provide higher quality data because participants are better able to assess their condition after exposure to some of the program content.



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